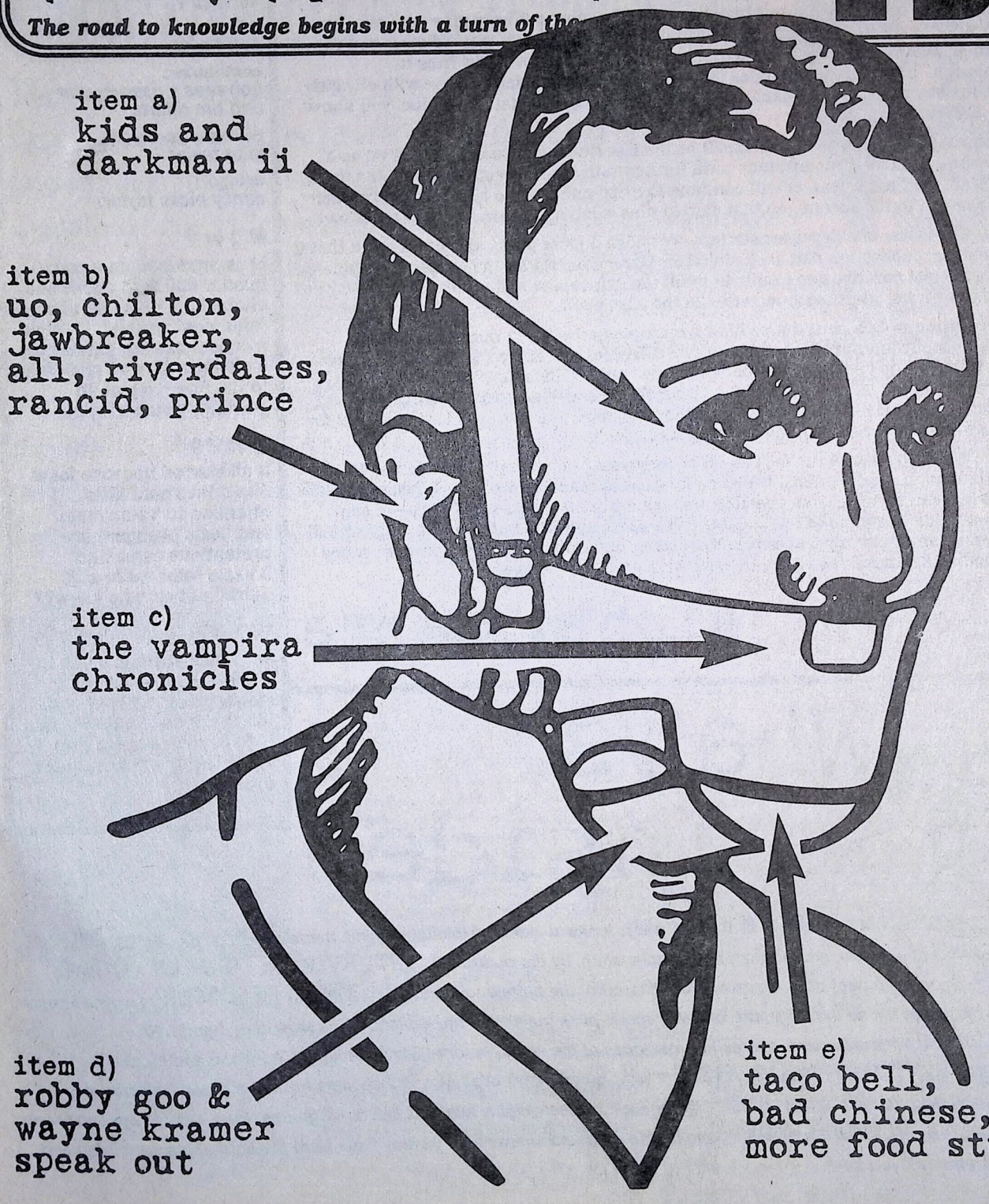
EXPLOITATION RETROSPECT 43

The road to knowledge begins with a turn of the



item a)
kids and
darkman ii

item b)
uo, chilton,
jawbreaker,
all, riverdales,
rancid, prince

item c)
the vampira
chronicles

item d)
robby goo &
wayne kramer
speak out

item e)
taco bell,
bad chinese,
more food stuff

on the road again...

a few months ago, I swore I was going to die in my current home. of course, that was shortly after trucking an ever-growing collection of toys, records, cds, books, zines, kitchen equipment and videos a mere one town away. in fact, i told everyone within earshot that my next move would consist of a pickup truck, the smallest u-haul trailer available, and whatever would fit in the two. uh, can i take that back?

at the end of october, your faithful editor will be ending a twenty-nine year relationship with the delaware valley and i'll be takin' er with me. it's that old story you've heard so many times: boy meets girl...boy and girl fall in love...girl lives in pittsburgh...boy puts 20,000 miles on car visiting girl...boy falls in love with city girl lives in...boy quits job and hauls his junk to pittsburgh to start a new life. you know how it goes.

for at least the next three years this'll be the last issue of er to use the del val as a home base, and all transmissions until further notice will all emanate from the three rivers city. but never fear, er will continue to exist, and i'll also be adding a few other publications to the second job that started nine years ago (more on that next issue).

as for this issue, it's bigger for starters. we added 8 more pages, despite the fact that it pushed our publication date (scheduled for late summer) into the early fall. fortunately, some great contributions came in to fill the extra space and i took the easy way out (writing reviews) while everyone else did the hard work.

new contributor bob rees shares his correspondence with the normally reclusive maila "vampira" nurmi while creep chip beef dave negrin scored a small press interview with the goo goo dolls just before "name" pushed them towards the popularity they deserve. you'll also find tim duarte checking in with an attempt to explain the sudden resurgence in the popularity of the atari 2600 (the main topic of issue #42 for anyone that missed it — copies are still available).

i hope you enjoy what's inside, and i'll be forwarding our new p'burgh address to everyone on the mailing list as soon as it becomes available. before i go, thanks to the following who made this ish possible: the kakster, sister leigh-ana, the cream chip beef one, tim duarte, bob rees, the fine folks at epitaph/lookout/estrus/ringing ear/hell yeah/dionysus/dr. strange/fat wreck chords/foxx entertainment, wayne kramer, robby goo and maila nurmi. look for a transmission around november 1...

aloha, dante

EXPLOITATION RETROSPECT

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HOw?

er is produced on a mac quadra 630 with quark and photoshop, plus lots of art from 'desk gallery'. finished mechanicals are printed on an imager plus 12 and given to the fine folks at afl printing, gloucester, nj.

wHY?

it all started because local film critics paid little attention to 're-animator' and 'toxic avenger.' one pretentious name and 9 years later we're still puttin' out er. who knew??

Wh3N?

er is published as close to quarterly as we can get. single issues by mail cost $2 or a 6 issue subscription is $10. you can also grab it FREE if you just keep your eyes open.

what's Inside?

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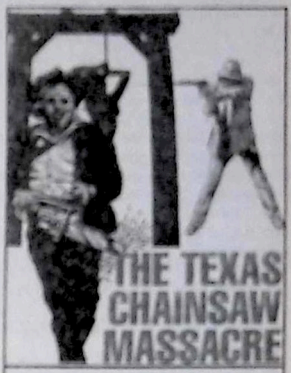
THE HORROR OF IT ALL!

EXPLOITATION CLASSICS AS VIDEO GAME



Grab your joystick and become "Leatherface," the homicidal, chainsaw wielding maniac of your nightmares!

The current debate over the Internet's allegedly easy access to "cyberporn" and the specter of pedophiles luring innocent compu-nerds into disrobing via video-conferencing has all too familiar a ring. With anything new comes the inevitably raised voices of concerned parents – and then politicos – who are aghast at the perceived filth and perversion that Bobby, Cindy and Susie are poisoning their minds with. Luckily, my parents never knew what type of dementia was being created for that harmless electronic babysitter, The Atari 2600.

A homicidal maniac has escaped from a mental institution. Can you protect the children and yourself from the fury of his knife?

"I WISH I HAD BACK ALL THE MONEY I SPENT AT THE ARCADE..."

Quite frankly, I don't think anyone was aware of the impact the Atari 2600 would have on our generation (I'm talking about those of us pushing, or already over the wall into, The Land of 30). After the numbing monotony of PONG and competitive systems like ADVERSARY, the masses of children raised on "Schoolhouse Rock," the Ralph Bakshi-tinged SPIDER-MAN, and post-nuclear Japanese fightfests like ULTRA-MAN and JOHNNY SOCKO needed a more universal outlet for their pre-pubescent rage and suburban angst. Luckily, the Taito Corporation was listening and *Space Invaders* drew us to movie theater lobbies and local convenience stores like flies to a dead squirrel.

By the time we turned *Pac-Man* into a national obsession, the coin-op videogames and their mutant offspring had rung us out like so much dirty laundry. In fact, at the height of its popularity, *Pac-Man* and its spin-offs alone were generating about $6 billion dollars (that's 24 billion quarters!) from the sale of records (the obsequious Top 10 single, "Pac-Man Fever"), two best-selling tips books, and a Saturday morning cartoon show...as well as jeans, lunchboxes, pajamas, toys, drinking glasses, and feminine deodorant spray. Well, that last one was actually a *Ms. Pac-Man* product.

And, like anything that grips the nation, the voices of our national conscience arose with concern. No less an authority than the surgeon general warned that children were becoming addicted, and a Stanford social psychologist went so far as to warn that *Pac-Man* "led into masculine fantasies of control, power, destruction." (Is this starting to sound familiar?)

Of course, had we actually been addicted to *Pac-man* we wouldn't have gone looking for cheap, sick thrills in the seamier parts of town. And game companies were happy to satisfy the sensational tastes that would come to earmark our generation...

"THE SAW IS FAMILY"

After all, what fun was there to be had in games like *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders*, *Missile Command* and *Asteroids*? Sure, some of them allowed you to let loose with the pent-up childhood rage that would spill over into the occasional case of

patricide or matricide, but most of the games were defeatist blows to our fragile teen egos.

Yes, *Pac-Man* devoured his enemies, but he lived in an "eat or be eaten" world that he couldn't truly conquer. *Missile Command* was the perfect government tool to make nuclear proliferation seem like a gas! We identified with the desolate, black & white spacescape of *Asteroids*, but it taught us the lesson that "the longer you stand still, the longer you'll survive...those that stray from their set position are quickly crushed." And the encroaching foreign "invaders" of that first arcade hit could be beaten back, but they inevitably squashed hopes for rebellion under the weight of their tireless advance.

The fine folks at Wizard were obviously aware of the void left by these games when they sat down and drew up the plans for *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, a game based on one of the creepiest horror films ever made. A company truly in touch with their customers, Wizard realized that a game that positioned you as a helpless victim was again sending the wrong message to the populace. So, what better way to lash out at the authority figures that got under your skin than to assume the guise of Leatherface and chainsaw your way to pwer-tool-wielding bliss?!

ned with your trusty chainsaw and ee fuel tanks, your sole goal is to flay, e and dice as many cowering victims as inhumanly possible. Pausing only to old the rushing thickets, fences, cow kulls and wheelchairs (in honor of Franklin), Leatherface hunts down his prey and splatters them all over the tv screen with a guttural roar from the saw.

Unfortunately, the inevitability of failure creeps in and Leatherface's ability to torment is limited to three fuel tanks. When they expire, a lone survivor is allowed to trot onto the darkening screen and give the misunderstood killer a swift kick in the ass. Yet the ending maintains the spirit of the original film, and lets you fire up "reset" for as many sequels as you desire.

"TRICK OR TREAT"

Few cinematic mass killers have had the silent charisma of Leatherface, though one wonders what a game featuring the early version of Freddy Krueger might have been like. So, what's a game designer to do when bringing the lumbering, unstoppable visage of HALLOWEEN's Michael Meyers to video life?

Well, in the case of *Halloween: The Video Game* (Wizard again, 'natch) you concentrate on the concepts that made the film such a screw-your-butt-to-the-seat eye-popper. 1) Unstoppable, knife-wielding maniac. 2) Gutsy babysitter. 3) A house fulla pre-teen rugrats just waitin' to have their bodies uncorked. And 4) That goddman music!

"Ladies and gentlemen, I think we've got another hit on our hands!"

Exchanging the saw-toting maniacism of Leatherface for the scaredy-cat, knees-bent, running-about sheer terror of "the babysitter" isn't an easy transition. (I heartily recommend an ass-kicking game of *NHL '95* with penalties off to get the remaining aggression out.) But once you accept the premise of the game — *"There's a killer in the house...save the kids without losing your head"* — you're golden.

Brilliantly rendered as the cross-section of an old house where you're babysitting, *Halloween* fills the hallways with terrified little kids (few game companies are secure enough to put children in peril from the word "GO!"), places the odd knife at your disposal, and lets Michael Meyers defy the laws of time and space by materializing behind you...then in front of you! It's no wonder that one round with this twisted cartridge leaves you a sweaty mess contorting yourself and screaming at the rudely animated babysitter to "run FASTER!!!"

Ultimately, the game achieves its place among the classics for the superior deaths dispatched on you, the babysitter. While the kids/pawns are "spared" a horrid death and just get knifed in the gut (with as graphic a blood-spurting as an Atari 2600 will allow), *you* don't get off that easily. One false move or misplaced jab with the knife and you're *literally* running around like a chicken without a head...arms akimbo and your life's juices streaming out of your freshly opened jugular. Ewwwww.

As a bonus,the entire game is scored to John Carpenter's trademark theme, which takes advantage of every tiny sound processing capability the 2600 has.

"TWO OUTTA THREE AIN'T BAD"

Unfortunately, not every 2600 games based on a classic horror flick achieves it's limitless potential. In fact, 20th Century Fox's insulting *Alien* cartridge can be summed up in four words: Pac-Man Plus Frogger.

The first screen insults your intelligence by placing "Ripley" in a dot-filled maze guarded by a group of roving "aliens" (that look amazingly like Audrey from the LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS musical), but the second is even worse. Your "Ripley" must cross a multi-lane highway of "aliens"...again looking like, ah what's the point.

Shame on you 20th Century Fox...you should've had Wizard create the game! Then again, how would the chest-burster have looked on a 2600?

Thanks to* Jane & Michael Stern's Encyclopedia of Pop Culture (HarperCollins © 1992) *for indispensible info on the home videogame craze.

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What's all the madness? Why is everyone returning to the dark ages, with a sudden interest in old cartridges from the early days of videogame history? That's a good question, one I'll try to answer it for you.

It's common for people to ask me why anyone would express interest in videogames of the past. There are several reasons, and it varies from person to person; it's more of an individual taste. One step is to look at your personal history of playing videogames. I, and many others, have "roots" in the early videogame systems. During the late 1970s-early 1980s, I began with an *Odyssey 2* and bought the famous *Atari 2600 Video Computer System* a few months afterward. It was the playing of games on these machines that molded my overall perception of videogames. Games like *Space Invaders, Missile Command, Asteroids, Pac Man*, and others were branded into my memory. The year and timeframe is crucial to many gamers. For instance, if the first videogame you ever played was on a Nintendo system, chances are you're not familiar with older systems such as the *Atari 2600/5200/7800, Intellivision, Colecovision*, etc. Your roots begin in the late 1980s with the Nintendo explosion - the second generation. Many new gamers didn't even know there *was* a whole videogame era before Nintendo, Sega, and the systems of today.

Living in this modern world, we first generation gamers are the minority; surrounded by second and third generation systems. It's hard to believe that the 8-bit Nintendo Entertainment System has already been replaced by the 16-bit Super Nintendo System. Adjusting to the second and third generation of game systems was difficult for me. I couldn't get used to the keypad controller Nintendo and Sega utilized, and I kept wishing for the old Atari-style joysticks. Despite all this, I bought a second generation system — a Sega Genesis — but it just didn't seem as much fun as videogames were years ago.

Look at the new games that are popular today. While some are original, many are take-offs or stem from ideas based upon videogames of the first generation. They have the same objective and theme of older games, but are just dressed up with fancy graphics and sound effects. Somehow, this has prevented me from becoming enthusiastic about the new game systems. I long for the originals.

Another reason for interest in older games is their simplicity. Many of today's games are too confusing and complex. I sort of like a game that doesn't require an instruction manual to figure out. There's excellent gameplay in many older games, but the graphics and sound do not meet today's standards. So what? Many older games are now considered classics and they are being brought back to 16-bit systems. For example, Activision just released a souped up version of *Pitfall* for the Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo.

Collecting is an entirely new twist for videogame fans. While many of us enjoy playing, there's a whole network of collectors/fans out there. The first generation systems, or at least a majority of them, are no longer being supported and have been discontinued. However, the network makes up for this. There are dozens of newsletters that you can receive, and I started one so I could find more contacts to trade games. The idea snowballed and now my newsletter, *The 2600 Connection* (see ad below), has over 400 subscribers. To my surprise, I never thought it would be so large. Videogame newsletters and fanzines provide information and are fun to read.

Collecting videogames is new, so this hobby is still in its early stages. Consumers in the 1990s are heading toward Compact Disc (CD) technology, leaving cartridge-based software behind to gather dust. I believe old videogames will have the same fate as 45 records and 8- track tapes — practically every household in the U.S. has them stored away in the attic or cellar. Old videogames are popular items at yard sales or flea markets because people want to get rid of them and make room for new games.

Another plus is that the classics are inexpensive. Prices are much cheaper than the games of the 1990s. It's crazy — I get so excited over buying a game for a dollar bill or 50 cents. What a bargain! There's a popular saying that fits quite well: "One person's junk is another's treasure." ☆

Tim Duarte is the editor of the popular Atari 2600 newsletter, '2600 Connection,' the source for information and news about everyone's favorite game system. Tim also wrote the intro article to ER42's section of 2600 reviews and articles. For ordering info see the ad below.

2600 Connection

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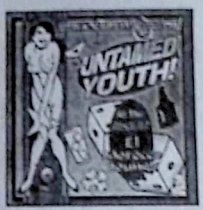

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Talking with A Boy Named (Robby) Goo

buffalo's goo goo dolls have been er favs since the release of the quintessential "end of relationship" album 'hold me up' mining similar territory as the legendary replacements, the band crafts catchy power-pop rock with hooks heavy enough to crack a rib their latest release, 'a boy named goo,' improves upon the major label groundwork set by 1993' 'superstar car wash' our own "cream ship beef" dave negrin had the opportunity for a phoner with bass player, co-singer & songwriter robby takac prior to the launch of their us tour

interview by dave negrin ...

I understand that the new record had a few different covers and you guys changed it after you finished it. Why so many changes?

Well, our original drummer had left right after we finished the record. He had done the cover work and he had [written] a song on the record that we decided probably wouldn't be a good idea to leave on there, so we had one taken off. We added a couple of cover songs (Lime Spiders' "Slave Girl" and "Disconnected" by The Enemies) that we had recorded in a session of B-sides with Robby Cauallo, who did 'Dookie.' We put those on the end of the record...

Was "Stand Alone" the track you removed?

Yes, it was.

So that's probably not going to surface on anything?

It may at some point. A B-side collection or a compilation or something. Maybe a European B-side for the single?

"Only One" sounds like you're talking about Dave Pirner from Soul Asylum or Kurt Cobain. Was any one person in mind when you were writing that?

Johnny wrote that one. I'm really not sure if there is anyone in mind. Probably it's about this local guy here (in Buffalo). To quote him (Johnny), he says, "If the guy never sold a record or got a deal in his life he'd be a bigger rock star than he'd ever be." I think that's kind of the vibe on that one.

The reason I mention Pirner is because I interviewed them on the last tour when you guys were opening for them. It was just before the album went huge, and a lot of things the band told me in the interview they ended up contradicting just a few months later.

Yeah?

I was just wondering — from the perspective of being on the road with them before and after their success — if you saw any changes as things were breaking for them?

That's a good question! I haven't really given it much thought. We didn't have all that much communication with head-line groups. We didn't really get to know them until the last week of the tour. By that point things were pretty much rolling with them. But no, I think they are pretty much taking it in stride, it seems.

the goos from the back of their debut album...guess which state this is

A while back I was reading an interview with Johnny and he was saying how he looks at the career of the band in three stages: "Drunk, Hung over, and Sober." Do you still find that true and what state are you in now?

(Laughs) At this very moment? (Laughs) At this very moment our publicist called me about ten minutes ago and I am very hung over! (Laughs) But as far as the band goes, I just think we're a little more focused now than we were a few years ago. It was like a hayride to hell about ten years ago. It was all this doin' what you could to get by and stuff. Now, things are a little bit more calculated as far as the music goes and the angle by which we approach things. We're ten years more knowledgeable about how things work. So as far as going in and making records or writing songs, I think we've honed our craft a bit. That could be where the sobering comment comes in.

You were talking about going back in to record those extra tracks...was there any significance to the songs you chose?

They were just songs that we always liked, you know? We did a couple of Damned covers as well. One of them ("Wait for the Blackout" from 'The Black Album') is actually in that TOMMY BOY movie. We did a Tommy Keaton song, a Soft Boys song, a lot of different songs that we heard over the years that we all liked. We wanted to do songs that applied to what we were doing. Some of them worked...some of them didn't. (Laughs)

Will we get to hear the rest of them when the tour starts?

Some of them maybe. I dunno. We're working on a new set starting today, so I'm not exactly sure what we're going to be pullin' out. I know we're kind of playing down the covers a bit. We don't want to turn into one of those...uh...Jesus. I'm wondering if I should say this or not, it may get me in trouble. We don't want to turn into one of these...uh...

Ah, just say it!

OK. We don't want to fall into one of those Evan Dando traps. Where all of your hits are written by someone else. One of those Michael Bolton traps! (laughs) You know? It's like you've got songs on the

radio, but they aren't yours! We're ten years into song writing now, and we want some merit on our own. College radio is funny like that. [They] jump quickly at covers just 'cause they're familiar with them.

Speaking of covers, how did you get involved with the 'No Alternative' project?

Paul Hack who runs Red Hot has always been a fan of the group. He called us, and he had this project coming together and he had a lot of really big names on the record, too. We were kind of flattered when he asked us to do it. We hadn't covered a song with Lance (Diamond) in a long time. He had been on the previous two records before 'Superstar Car Wash' ("Down on the Corner" on 'Jed' and "I Can Never Take the Place of Your Man" on 'Hold Me Up'). We thought it was a pretty cool opportunity to get into the studio with him again. We recorded a cover of the Stones's "Bitch." We plan on doing something with him this year as well, so...I'd like to keep that thing going.

When Warner Brothers dropped Metal Blade Records were you already signed to them, or was the band's future uncertain?

Ya know, I've never been sure how the politics of these things work. We kind of ended up on Warner...I'm not going to say against our will because obviously, things could have been worse. There was never really a question of whether or not we had a choice of being on Warner or going somewhere else. I think we are the only act that they kept of all the Metal Blade bands. I was a little dismayed in the beginning. The whole 'Superstar Car Wash' thing left a bad taste in my mouth.

You mean the way they handled the record?

Yeah! Since the shakeup over there things have been going really, really well.

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What about it disappointed you?

Well, I just think, not to cry over spilt milk or anything...they chose a single that we weren't into too much, and when that single didn't take off they just let the record lay there.

Which one was that? "We Are the Normal" (written by the band and Paul Westerberg)?

Yeah (with disgust). I can remember sitting on our bus and one of them going, "Well, we're just not going to be releasing any more singles off this record." And we are one of those bands that when we sit down, we try to write fourteen singles. We don't go, "Oh we've got one good song here. Let's record forty minutes of filler." That's how you get these freshman bands that pop up these days. They're signing them left and right, not Warner exclusively, but most of the majors. Then they do their best to find a song that they can break on MTV and sell.

What would you have liked to release?

Off the last record? Shit! I can think of thirteen (laughs)! It wouldn't have mattered to me. The one I didn't want as a single was "Normal." I think "Fallin' Down" or "'Cause You're Gone" would have worked. I just didn't like the idea of coming out of the box with a viola.

So you wouldn't want to release "Name" (from 'A Boy Named Goo') as a single? That's kind of like "Normal" in that it's not representative of the rest of the album.

No, no. I definitely wouldn't want to release that early on. I wouldn't mind knocking the ball out of the park with that one later, though. [Ed. note: "Name" is currently all over "modern rock" radio, and the debut — conspicuously focused on the "cute" Johnny — is popping up regularly on MTV...I only watch for 'Beavis & Butt-head' and the horror show that is 'Singled Out']

I know you mentioned him earlier, but who is Lance Diamond? How did you get involved with him?

Lance is a friend of mine who lives across the street. We've been friends for years and years and years. He basically does a lounge show around our town. He does a show in a place called the Elm Wood Lounge that's about a block from here. He plays there every weekend, three sets, two nights a week. His sets are the weirdest amalgamation you can possibly imagine. He does Style Council and Luther Vandross and the Spin Doctors. You just never know what you're going to hear. It's weird, he's probably twenty years older than me. I forget about that sometimes.

Is he going to be opening for you on some dates?

Well, it would be a little weird having him open for us. We actually had him open for us once, here in Buffalo. I mean, he could be mayor, you know? He's just that popular in town. It worked here, but generally he covers Top 40 stuff and he does touch on some odd stuff, but in general he's got a three set R&B lounge act. We will work with him again. I think we'll wait for the right opportunity like we did last year with 'No Alternative.'

How did you come to choose Lou Giordano to produce the new album?

Samiam. I don't know if you're familiar with them...he did their last record.

Which one, 'Clumsy'?

Right. James Brogan, the guitarist, was talking to Johnny and he was like, "Hey, who's doing your new record, because we're shoppin for a producer?" And he mentioned Lou. We really like all the Sugar records; we figured that just because this guy hung out with Hüske

Du he was going to have some great stories. (laughs) We called him up when he was finishing the Samiam record and asked him and he was like, "Yeah, I'll do it." We sent him a tape with the songs and he was really impressed with the songs themselves, which was kind of what won us over. His interest laid more in the songwriting, the melodies and the lyrical content of our songs. That really impressed us. He's an engineer as well as a producer. He was really our first choice; he dove into the songs.

He seems to give the albums he works on a raw sound.

Yeah! Yeah! If you A/B this one versus 'Superstar' you can definitely hear the rawness on this record.

I've heard a lot of people compare your sound to The Replacements. Does that bother you?

Nah, I think it's easy. I think it's an easy way to explain a sound. I don't completely agree. I mean, we do use guitars and drums and we're a melodic rock band. After ten years, though, that comparison starts to get a little old. (laughs) I don't know man, yesterday I read this article from Rochester saying, "The Green Day-esque Goo Goo Dolls..." and my skin nearly turned inside out! So, I think I'll stick to The Replacements! (laughs)

Fair enough. So I guess you won't be covering "Basket Case" on this tour?

We actually got quite a laugh out of it. They (Green Day) have been around for a while, but I think we've been around twice as long as they have. It was just kind of funny reading that.

When you're writing a song, do you write with one of you in mind singing or does that come into play later?

On this record we did more separate writing than we did in the past. I just think that it had a lot to do with the state of the band at that point. Everything got kind of...like the 'Superstar' record as far as lyrical content. I don't want to use the word "introspective," but that's exactly what I mean. Although it's a very overused term, it was a kind of inward look at how we were all feeling and dealing. Instead of saying, "Jesus, I'm fucked up!" saying "Everybody around me is fucked up! It ain't just me!" (laughs) I think there is a lot more insightful things on this record about other people and things. As far as the assignment of things, I don't take full credit for writing things that I only come up with the melodies and chord structures for because I'm not really a guitar player. To me, a huge chunk of the song is the melody, riffs, and the minor-major juxtaposition which I don't understand, whatsoever, being one of those four string guitar player guys. That's where Johnny's thing comes in with me the most. I get his guitar playing knowledge added to the things that I do.

There was a rumor flying around at the end of the 'Superstar' tour that the band was having problems and that the Goos had actually broken up...

Yeah, that's why the personnel change kind of ended up happening. That's why George ended up parting ways with us. It's a long time, we're coming up on our tenth year now. It's a long time to be in a band. Especially a long time to be in a band without a certain level of success to where you can sit back and say, "OK, we've achieved this and we've achieved that. Now I can just sit back and relax for a little while and put together a record." Tension starts to build and every move you make is scrutinized, and you're fearful of losing your label, losing your publishing, or whatever. And that's kind of your lifeline, you know? It's kind of the same thing as showing up for work late three or four days in a row and going, "What's going on? Am I going to lose this job? What's going on?" The tension just gets to be a little much.

So was he sort of bringing everybody down?

It wasn't George in particular. I want to make that clear. It wasn't anything that he did. I just think that the chemistry between the three of us was being challenged by outside forces, and basically, the only way it was going to survive was to make a change like that. I still wrestle with it every day, to be honest with you. It's not easy to have a relationship with somebody for that long and just say, "In order to keep going we need to make some changes." That's a really tough thing to do. I've never had to do that before. I've never been in anything that's lasted ten years before...except maybe grammar school.

So he didn't want to leave the band, that was something that you and Johnny sat down and decided?

That was something that the three of us tried to sit down and talk about.

How did you get involved with the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 6 soundtrack? [With the Blue Oyster Cultish "I'm Awake Now"]

Is that what it was? Six?! (laughs)

Maybe fourteen and a half...

(still laughing) Metal Blade got the soundtrack actually. Basically, what the deal was, was that nobody got paid. They grabbed a lot of catalog stuff and pulled a few favors. It actually turned out to be a pretty cool thing. It was our first experience working with an outside producer...it was fairly enlightening. It was done with Michael Blum who had done some stuff for Redd Kross and a couple of other bands.

I know it's hard to project, but where will the Goos be in five to ten years?

Well, I'm thirty years old right now. I'd feel really foolish doing this when I'm forty. What we do is pretty effervescent at this point, ya know? It's a pretty bubbly sort of thing. We've been trying to keep things true to what we are as people and where our lives are at. I get comments all the time like, "Hey, why don't you guys write another record like 'Jed'?" And I'm just like, "'Cause it ain't in me no more!" This record is in me. That's why this record came out. (laughs) I mean, if you run in place, you get tired quick and never end up going anywhere. I don't know, I could see us sticking together for another five to ten years. I don't see us stopping now. I'm sort of cautious to say what will happen in five years because who knows? I may be drafted! I hope it stays together. I really enjoy doing it, it's a serious release for me. ☠

goo goo-ography

goo goo dolls (1987)
mercenary-celluloid records; rereleased on cd by warner in 1994

jed (1989)
death-enigma

hold me up (1990)
metal blade-warner bros.

superstar car wash (1993)
metal blade-warner bros.

a boy named goo (1995)
warner bros.

"i'm awake now"
on soundtrack to A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET PART 6

"bitch" (with the Incredible Lance Diamond)
on NO ALTERNATIVE

"wait for the blackout"
on soundtrack to TOMMY BOY

Dishing Out The Hard Stuff

An Interview with Wayne Kramer of The MC5

When I received Wayne Kramer's 'The Hard Stuff' from the folks at Epitaph I had no idea what to expect. As I told Kramer in our St. Patty's Day interview, my knowledge of he and his former band (The MC5) was limited to infrequent spins of the rip-snorting anthem "Kick Out the Jams."

One quick consult with JT later I was armed with a copy of the 5's swan song ('High Time', Atlantic, 1971) and Kramer's record company bio.

Booted from Elektra while 'Back in the USA' charted in the Top 40, Kramer and Co. found themselves attempting a commercial follow-up for new label Atlantic. When that LP stiffed, the label "cooled" on the band (as Kramer puts it) and an inevitable implosion followed the release of 'High Time' (1971).

The mid-1970s found Kramer doing time in federal prison for dealing drugs, a stint that changed him in more ways than one. Musically, he found a mentor in fellow inmate Red Rodney, a saxophonist with the legendary Charlie Parker Band, and the man Kramer calls his "musical father."

The years since have included a brief stint with Johnny Thunders (in Gang War), the unfortunate passing of former bandmates Rob Tyner and Fred "Sonic" Smith, and performances on the first two Was (Not Was) albums.

The following conversation took place shortly before Kramer played guitar like his life depended on it and showed us all why he's considered the grandfather of punk and heavy metal guitar heroics.

I'll confess that what I basically knew about the MC5 before I got your new album was "Kick Out the Jams." So I started going out and buying some of the old stuff and really enjoy 'High Time'...

It's the best one.

Well, you started out, put out the live album first, that charts. The second album, you tried to go a little more commercial.

Tried...to go a lot more commercial and it didn't work.

Then 'High Time' is this great album that did nothing. Do you think that your political stance as a band had an effect on your popularity?

I think it created incredible pressure from the police. And that converted to constant hassles at the gigs, with like being arrested for doing "that song" with the m word in it. Kind of the prevailing attitude was when was somebody going to "do something" about the MC5. From the White House to the FBI and all the way down to the local Detroit police.

Didn't you feel like that was a bit ridiculous...

Yeah, but we were serious when we said we wanted to corrupt the youth of America, send them screaming, running into the streets to tear down anything that would stop them from being free by any means necessary. On one level that created a tremendous problem for the band. And then record companies...the way major labels work is they sign five bands, hope one band goes triple platinum and the other four bands can eat shit and die. They really don't care about you, your band, your ideas, your dreams, your concepts, nothing.

Were you on Atlantic for all three albums?

No, just the second two. So when the MC5's first Atlantic album 'Back in the USA' didn't go gold they cooled on us. We were way too much trouble, too hot to handle...

Too much bad press?

Well, we didn't get a lot of bad press, but it was constant pressure because of our militant political stance and there were plenty of new bands coming along they could sign up that were good little soldiers and all they wanted to do was play their songs, and be rock stars. And not cause trouble, and that was something the MC5 couldn't help but do.

So the first album was on Elektra?

Yeah

Why did you guys get dropped after one album?

We were fired for unprofessional conduct. We had a major problem with them when they wanted to put out a "clean" version of our album. See, they had another artist called David Peel, who put out a record called 'Have a Marijuana' which had a song called "Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers" on it. David Peel's a street singer, still is...

Up in Washington Square.

When we heard that we said, "What's the beef? This is no big thing, our record has this one song [where] the title goes, 'Kick out the jams, motherfuckers!' What's the problem?" This is the way people talk, you know? And they said, "No problem," they'd stand behind us. So we put the album out and we did a clean version (where "brothers and sisters" is substituted for "motherfuckers") for

...watching everything that's happened in the meantime and

the single, because we knew that "Kick Out the Jams Motherfuckers" would never be a hit on AM radio! We weren't stupid about it. So we figured let the single get as far in the charts as its gonna go, wait till it even starts to come down, then put out the album because the shit's gonna hit the fan, but there's nothing they can do about it 'cause we'll be over, we'll be established. Well, when the single started to sell they rushed out the album. When the shit hit the fan they weren't ready for it and so they said, "Can we put out a clean version" and we said "No" and they went and did it anyway. Took John Sinclair's liner notes off the record, took the "motherfucker" off and out it out.

Then they said we had "creative freedom" in our advertising and there was a local store that wouldn't sell our records. So, we put an ad in the underground newspaper that said "Fuck Hudson's: If They Won't Sell Ya the Record, Kick the Doors Down." Put the Elektra logo on it and sent them the bill. And so, they fired us. With the number 30 album in the country.

seeing all these fucking hair bands on MTV and saying,

They were trying to be like hip capitalists. We just wanted them to be, "just do the business and we'll take care of the cultural end." You know?

Having done time in prison for selling drugs, was it hard to watch Johnny Thunders play off the junkie persona?

Yeah, it presented a huge conflict for me. On one hand I cared about the guy; he was capable of really being charming, endearing, and funny cat, very perceptive. And on the other hand, and there's part of me that's like I have a small caretaker thing, and I thought "this could be a great rock and roll band. I can control the music and he can be Johnny and stagger around, and this could be exciting and a little dangerous." Then there's the other part of me that knows better and knows I can't control anyone's behavior and I can't save anybody. So, yeah it created a problem and I knew it would right from the beginning.

How long was Gang War together?

About a year. It's what I try and elaborate on in the song "Junkie Romance." Me and Mick Farrin, my best friend and songwriting partner, for years we've known lots of people — and you have to — who believe drug use and this whole mythology that being fucked up makes you sexy or makes you play better or makes you witty or makes your teeth straight or whatever... This is all a big lie, especially in the music world and in rock and roll it's a huge lie and I tried to kill myself for years trying to live out that "live fast, die young, good-looking corpse" all that shit. And for a long time we talked about how could we address this in a song and we actually kinda refused to do it for a long time. Because we didn't want to continue to contribute to the romanticism of it. Through that is how we found the way to do the song. I can't control anyone's behavior, and it's a mistake to attempt to. But I can deal with the mythology of it, and that's the power I have. So what I tried to do in the song is kinda pull the sheet of it and say, "this is what this is really all about."

You and the MC5 were so political, does it piss you off to see bands that are in a position to say something go the opposite way and adopt the "Let's Party" philosophy?

No, because there are plenty of bands that are smart. Alot of the Epitaph bands, in particular, from Bad Religion to Rancid and the Offspring, these are all smart guys. They know how all this works and they know the value of being on top of shit, guys like Rollins; these are people that know what time it is. So I can't be concerned if there's a bunch of bands that still think it's cool to get fucked up. Believe me...there's a price to be paid for all that and alot of these guys are young guys.

There's a price to be paid...just look at Fred Smith, Rob Tiner, Jerry Nolan, Johnny Thunders...

Tiner and Fred Smith died of what you could call "natural causes."

Fred had heart failure, right?

Both of them. Still, the list is real long of people that didn't pay attention. 'Cause what it ends up doing is it robs your time. And you only get this much time, so if you don't make any contributions to life on this fucking little blurb in space, then you have to be on top of it.

Especially in music. Playing music is a really demanding pursuit. It's a real taxing discipline. All your memory comes into play, all your motor skills, your ability to react and think on your feet, your ability to think ahead while you're doing all this other stuff. And the necessity to plug your feelings into this whole thing, and then interact with other players, it gets real complicated. You have to be on top of shit, you can't be fucked up and do this right.

There are two spoken word pieces on the disc. Have you given any thought to a spoken word disc or book of writings?

I'm going to continue to explore it on my next record. In fact, I've gotten a couple things written already. And I'm going to do a thing with Rollins; he's putting together a compilation of a lot of different artists on a spoken word disc. And I'm going to do a record this year with John Sinclair that's going to be Wayne Kramer all experimental guitar playing and John Sinclair's spoken verse.

I like it because in a song form you've got a rhyme scheme and a melody and those things work in that form, but in the spoken word thing — especially in the kind of stuff that I like, what's called "free verse" — it's almost like a narrative form, but it also has a poetic element to it. And it's almost like a direct connection to the listener, it's almost like you're talking right to them.

"My band'd play with these guys and spit them out!"

What's the last book that you read?

It's called There Are No Children Here, and I forget the author. It's almost like a long essay on the lives of a family and two young brothers in the Henry Horner homes in Chicago, in the projects. And what these two young children, and all the children that live in those projects, what their lives are like. It was really heart breaking.

Do you read a lot more than you listen to music while you're on tour?

I do all simultaneously. I usually read in the morning and I read at night before I go to bed. During the day I'm working. I'm reading right now, Notes of a Dirty Old Man, the last book Bukowski wrote...that's the only one I haven't read yet.

What's your proudest musical moment, either solo or as a member of a group?

Well, last night was pretty good.

THE HARD STUFF continues on page 22

the Vampira Chronicles

by Bob Rees

Bob Rees shares Maila "Vampira" Nurmi's memories of Hollyweird in the colorful 1950's

Vampira... The exotic name conjures up misty memories of a voluptuous 1950's television horror hostess to some people. But, to most sci-fi aficionados, she was Ed Wood, Jr.'s most beautiful, if not bizarre, characterization. Wood's campy, cult film PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE reigns as the worst film of all time, due in part to winning the "Golden Turkey Award," courtesy of the Medved brothers. At any rate, Maila "Vampira" Nurmi's gothic presence lingers with us nearly forty years after her brief cameo appearance in Wood's PLAN 9. Certainly not a small accomplishment for an actress who was on the screen for a scant two minutes, and did not speak one word of dialogue!

So, why do we still wax nostalgic for her? Curiously, she continues to exude a mysterious aura, due in large part to her association with Ed Wood, Bela Lugosi, and even James Dean! What an odd collection of characters! But, don't forget this woman lived, worked, and played in the eclectic fringe of Hollywood's underbelly in the 1950's. Though Ms. Nurmi secured parts in a few minor films after PLAN 9, it is her Wood camp masterpiece that remains her notorious crowning achievement. Clearly, I'm a fan of this charming lady, and was mesmerized when she worked her magic on me so long ago.

My very earliest memories of Vampira came via Forry Ackerman's *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine. Vampira's menacing, but alluring, image caught my eye. The magazine offered that when signature seekers approached her, she flatly stated, "I give epitaphs, not autographs!" Aside from *Famous Monsters* and some televised viewings of PLAN 9 it was difficult for me to pursue my Vampira fascination. That is, until 1982.

As fate would have it, some friends of mine in Los Angeles ran across Maila Nurmi while pursuing their, and my, interest in James Dean. One contact led to another, and voila — Maila was located. She's very reclusive, and reticent to discuss Dean, Wood or Lugosi. Since I was not, at first, allowed to have her mailing address, I would send my letters to an emissary, who then passed my letters on to Maila. In time, Maila softened to me, and happily offered me her mailing address, as well as her precious memories of those special times in Los Angeles in the Mid-Fifties.

After sifting through volumes of correspondence I've created an intimate collection of Maila Nurmi's reminiscences published here. Maila's first correspondence with me began with "Your fan letter is...the first really literate and intelligent one ever!" Naturally, I was flattered and her spell-casting on me had begun. She wondered if I thought of her as a "highway across the veil to James Dean and Bela Lugosi." I suppose, in a sense, that perception was accurate, but unfairly limiting to someone as rich and colorful as Maila.

BELA LUGOSI

She mentioned the "saturation distribution" PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE had received and commented on Lugosi, "Bela died early in the filming and a double was used. I worked with him (Bela) a number of times though, and we were friends, I think. First we were guest stars together on a Red Skeleton Show (one week of rehearsal), so we got to know one another. No other human I have ever met has made me feel so regal and precious. He was a gentleman of infinite dignity and refinement. Mr. Lugosi was a victim of a hospital induced drug addiction for the last three years of his life only. He was too dignified a person to sink to 'milking' sympathy. And he got no sympathy — only smears and jeers."

Maila indicated Ed Wood not only specialized in manufacturing exploitation films, but was capable of practicing some exploitation of Mr. Lugosi's persona, as well. "I'd say Bela was a victim of Ed Wood, society, and himself," she affirmed.

GLEN OR GLENDA (1953) was Lugosi's first work for Ed Wood. It was an odd docudrama that

was largely autobiographical for Wood. This story, validating the transvestite lifestyle, was hosted by Bela! He played the role of the "spiritual puppeteer of life." For one day's work as the host/narrator of this debacle, Lugosi was paid $1,000.

I asked Maila if the film GLEN OR GLENDA was taken seriously in 1953, or was perceived as funny even then. "I don't know about early responses to GLEN OR GLENDA, but I guess it was just passed off as a very bad second feature. As were all Ed Wood movies in the 50s." She indicated, however, that GLEN OR GLENDA was her favorite Wood film. "It was autobiographical and poignant. Lugosi had no sense of humor and was overplaying because Wood was milking the early essences of stage acting out of him."

"Wood doubtless thought he had extracted a fine dramatic performance out of his actor. Bela was too sick to care much one way or the other — so long as he pleased his boss. All of this is only my considered opinion." I mentioned that it would seem impossible to find two more disparate individuals than Bela Lugosi — fundamentalist actor — and the rebellious James Dean. Ideologically speaking, the two actors seem to be diametrically opposed. She set me straight about my misconception.

"Jimmy (Dean) and Bela did not know one another, but they would have liked and respected one another as both were gentle, introverted, kind and high-minded." But she added she felt they both lacked emotional maturity.

"Bela was very sick and would crawl out of his deathbed, at the last, to tub thump Ed Wood movies, only to be insulted by a public who had been poisoned by a smear campaign." Presumably, Maila was referring to the media's treatment of Lugosi's drug addiction. "There was a benefit for Bela at the Paramount Theater in Hollywood. It was widely advertised that he needed money for medical bills. Five hundred invitations were sent out (mostly to people with whom he had worked during his 30 year career in films). Three people responded. Marie Wilson's husband, Alan Nixon, came. Frank Sinatra sent a check for $100."

TOR JOHNSON

Tor Johnson appeared in several Ed Wood films. It seemed natural to ask Maila about her recollections of "The Angel," as he was known in the professional wrestling world. "Tor Johnson was a member of Ed Wood's professional entourage, so he worked all pics." The description of Wood's entourage sounded like a rag-tag conglomeration of misfits, aspiring to be perceived as members of an elite Algonquin "roundtable" gathering. No one was fooled, except maybe the participants.

Maila continued, "Tor was a gentle, kindly man. Some juvenile delinquents tried to overturn our car during a monster personal appearance tour. Tor said (phonetically), 'Pee knudt poys. Khoo hooome.' (He had a Swedish accent) The boys disbanded under his influence." She recalled that she and Tor sometimes helped support, physically, the ailing Bela Lugosi as he went about his various rounds. Tor under one arm, Maila under the other. Then there's the infamous story of Tor's baptismal in a Hollywood swimming pool. Seems that since a church was financing PLAN 9, a baptism was in order. It was not easy to get Tor 'righted' after he was dunked and cleansed of his sins. Thankfully, he wasn't cleansed of all his sins, which is why we still have his Ed Wood performances to treasure."

Vampira

Maila Nurmi has been asked over the years if she got her idea for Vampira's appearance from Carol "Luna" Borland, of MARK OF THE VAMPIRE fame. To this assertion she replied, "I may have, but if I did, it was purely subliminal. I don't recall ever having seen a horror film before I did Vampira. Nor have I seen MARK OF THE VAMPIRE after the fact." I wondered how the Charles Addams cartoon character, Morticia, had impressed her. "Vampira was not exactly derived from Morticia. Here's how it went. At first I did the Addams lady exactly at a masquerade ball. A TV studio asked me to portray the character without the consent of Charles Addams. So I kept the dress only (but slit the skirt way up). The studio elected to do a similar set. Also, of course, I kept the fact that the lady was a Victorian vampire. But I gave her movie star hair and make-up, a voluptuous figure (Morticia had a stick figure and bare feet) and mesh hose and platform shoes — Morticia (who had no name at the time) was a matron, mother and head of a pedestrian household. Vampira was a vamp and a bachelor girl and distinctly adverse to things pedestrian."

"I wanted the job but was unwilling to steal so broadly from a respected artist. I thought if I had brought the studio something visually similar, they would accept it. Here is the concoctions I wrote (for) the recipe:

2 oz. Theda Bara (vamp, vamp)
2 oz. Morticia (morbid Victoriana)
3 oz. Norma Desmond (SUNSET BOULEVARD)
4 oz. Tallulah Bankhead (the voice dahling)
2 oz. Marilyn M. (Demons are a ghoul's best friend)
3 oz. Katie Hepburn (Victorian English)
2 oz. Bette Davis (mama, baby)
3 oz. Billie Burke (dilettante insouciance)
3 oz. Marlene D. (singing voice)
8 oz. 'Bizarre' magazine pin-up (an S&M magazine of the day), big boobs, waist cincher, mesh hose, high heels, long nails

Add 3 lizard eggs, 2 moth-balls and a glass eye from a pygmy. Shake vigorously until steaming."

"I'm a serious actress actress and love to play barren, spinsterish women, as well as voluptuous types. But Vampira was not acting, she was performing and was great fun to do. I love to perform because I need the release to cover the shyness I suffer," she concluded.

ED WOOD, JR.

Many peculiar tales have been disseminated as regards the troubled life and times of Ed Wood, Jr. I'd have been remiss not to inquire about the off-the-wall psyche of this odd entrepreneur. "About Ed Wood," she stated, " he was in fact a transvestite, but did not practice it at work except during the filing of GLEN OR GLENDA. When he was before the camera in a white Angora sweater, playing Glenda, it was hardly practical for him to change clothes for appearance' sake, just to jump behind the camera for a shot of someone else."

"See, during PLAN 9 (and I worked only one day), he wore men's clothes (like riding britches) and shoes but did use a megaphone." This conjures up the ghostly visage of Eric von Stroheim from SUNSET BOULEVARD. "Ed Wood, it seemed to me, was an animal lover, a kind man," she responded.

There have been rumors as to Ed's fondness of the grape, and his authoring pornographic novels in his final, destitute days — but these topics weren't covered in our correspondence. Maila went on to mention that she thought that Ed was not particularly intelligent, and that he was possibly unaware of this fact. Perhaps his was a classic case of his reach exceeding his grasp? She went on to explain that Ed wrote prolifically, "he had no sense of humor, and was totally literal and matter-of-fact."

PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE

PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE. Just reading those preceding five words probably brought a smile to your face. And why not? Where else do you get cardboard gravestones blowing in the wind, mismatched day and night footage, Bela Lugosi's final brief mute appearance, stupefying dialogue, medieval costumes in outer space, pie plate flying saucers, and Tor Johnson, Criswell, and Vampira tossed in for good measure? Maila reflected, " The atom bomb had just newly been invented and Oppenheimer was much in the news shortly before PLAN 9 was written (1956) — so Ed Wood's theories about nukes were logical deductions of a probable future. When I first heard about GRAVE ROBBERS FROM OUTER SPACE (PLAN 9's working title), this is what I heard, he had: (1) film footage of the Hollywood premiere of the first Liberace film, SINCERELY YOURS; (2) stock footage of 'flying saucers'; (3) stock footage of tanks; (4) cutting rooms clips from three Lugosi movies; (5) backers who would put up $5,000 (from a church group); and (6) the will to formulate a movie from this mismatched footage. It grew into PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE. Little did I dream I would be a part of it. Under the cape was the by-then-deceased Bela's wife's chiropractor. [Ed. note: Unless I'm mistaken, I think it was actually Wood's wife's chiropractor.] Bela — not the chiropractor." Referring to her character's fate in PLAN 9, she said "I am still roaming the earth powerless. Is that worse than being held prisoner in a Chinese fortune cookie factory, do you think? Wood apparently put clips of me in another film. I knew nothing of that till recently. Other than that 15 minutes before his camera (in which I insisted on playing mute and was paid $200) I did not work for Ed."

After finishing PLAN 9, I wondered if Maila ever heard from Ed Wood again. Sure enough, another film offer was forthcoming, albeit 15 years later! Maila remembered, "When I was in General Hospital (the real one — not the TV soap) he phoned me. I was just noodles from the waist down, but he was directing a movie and wanted me nonetheless. That was 1971. His associate got me on the phone (one of those beer boozed alcoholic morons who hang out at the racetrack) this was our dialogue:

He: I got a part for ya baby, Ed wants ya.
Me: You haven't seen me, I can't walk.
He: Ya kin sit up can't ya? Yer lyin' in dis coffin see, an ya sit up. Ya ain't got no clothes on. Ya kin sit up can't ya?
Me: (Stunned) Yessss — I — can sit up.
He: Well, yer lyin' in dis coffin — ya sit tup — an dis guy guy jumps ya — "urghhh"— he says. Fer a hunnert apples, baby, an usin' yer name.
Me: Miss Garbo isn't working. She can sit up better than I can.

"This was the last I ever heard from Ed Wood. I did not ever socialize with him — only slightly with Mr. Lugosi, as he did little entertaining and I did none. We had respect for one another, I believe, but little common ground."

MAILA NURMI

For Maila, there were a few minor movie roles in the 1950s, the most notable of which was THE MAGIC SWORD, wherein she played a hag. During the 1960s and 1970s Maila was the proprietress of an antique shop called, aptly, *Vampira's Attic*. She abandoned this project because many people regarded it as an antique museum rather than a shop. They didn't want to purchase something and disturb a tasteful display, she related.

Maila retired her Vampira character for 24 years. Then, in 1980, she was paid $300 to do a home movie called BUNGALOW INVADER. Maila reported it "was a bungling invasion on my piece of mind." It was shown briefly at a comedy theater in Los Angeles.

Now, in the 1990s, I am glad to report that Maila is enjoying herself and her fame once again. She has appeared at various conventions, cut a record, and given interview for film and television documentaries devoted to James Dean and Ed Wood.

Maila is a bright poet, a romantic philosopher, an avid animal lover, a warm, passionate, captivating artist. Her presence in PLAN 9 enriches the film, just as her presence in my life has been an enriching experience for me. I'll always cherish the many letters that comprise "The Vampira Chronicles." ☠

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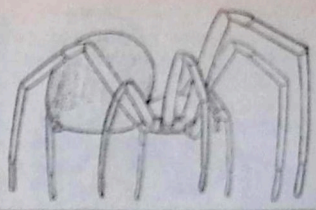
Zines and Web Sites



The "zine explosion" continues unabated, with new publications showing up in our mailbox on a weekly basis.

Not helping any is the equally explosive growth of the World Wide Web (WWW) and its easy access to on-line publishing.

With a computer, a modem, some free time, and a little desire you can publish on the web for as little as a $20 per month access fee.

Compare that to the $500 it costs us to produce and mail each issue of ER, and you can see why the economics of zine publishing are changing daily.

ZINES

Reviewing each zine that comes through the door has become a daunting task, and quite frankly I'm just not up to it. The following is a guide to what's floating around out there... If I couldn't find a price listed I put $2. Oh, and if you do want to send away for any of the following — or any zine for that matter — send the poor publisher ***cash*** *and not a check made out to the name of the zine!*

AUDITIES '4/'3
PO Box 1555
Stafford, TX 77497

Your guide to "insanely great pop" with news and notes on your favorite performers, plus straightforward reviews for the pop maniac. This ish includes looks at Goo Goos, Muffs, Badfinger best of and more, plus vinyl bin discoveries, pop on-line and more.

BUNNYHOP '5/'5
PO Box 421073
San Francisco, CA 94142

Formerly known as WAFFLE, this is the "Yearbook" edition. Includes hundreds of school photos (real or not? I don't know), plus interviews with Kerri Kenney (from 'The State' and Cakelike), Daniel Clowes, Mr. Rogers and the "Detention Kid" from Snapple. Reviews and more, all in a swell-looking package with a great cover illo.

CARBON 14 '5/'4
PO Box 29247
Phila., PA 19125

Larry and Leslie are back with another great ish featuring an informative interview with Ben Vaughn, Part 2 of the Genesis P-Orridge i'view and chats with Alice Donut, Psyclone Rangers and more. Plus, reviews, rants, even yours truly. First 1500 copies include a 4-song 7" with Blag from Dwarves, unreleased Cosmic Psychos, Snail, and Ultra Bide. Tell 'em dante sent ya.

FIZZ '3/'3
1509 Queen Anne Ave. N. #276
Seattle, WA 98109

Interviews with Ex-Idols, Ween, Fall-Outs (by Kim from Muffs), Cramps. Articles on SXSW and animal bands. Plus all the Fizzy depts. we've come to know and love.

JOE May '95/'2
823 E. Baltimore St.
Baltimore, MD 21202

Slick-looking publication with a — what else? — coffee theme running through it. As one might imagine, there's recipes, poetry, interviews, prose, and film and book reviews. Superb-looking piece that's a steal for '2.

OUT YOUR BACKDOOR '7/'3
4686 Meridian Rd.
Williamstown, MI 48895

Terrific travel zine, even for those of us that travel everywhere on four wheels. Articles on archery, the ultimate biking jacket, movie reviews, and their own love of cheap, cheesy vinyl.

PSYCHOTRONIC VIDEO '12/'4
3309 Route 97
Narrowsburg, NY
12764-6126

Interviews with Bruce Glover, Brion James, June Wilkinson, and William (MANIAC) Lustig. Lots of reviews in the PV vein.

SHOCK CINEMA '7/'4
PO Box 518
Peter Stuyvesant Station
NY, NY 10009

Steve Puchalski's annual offering checks in none too soon, as the summer film season begins to wind down and the Fall Rental Season goes into full gear. And without Steve's one-of-a-kind takes on films like 'Cisco Pike,' 'Thog,' 'Pit Stop' and more. Plus, forgotten drive-in fodder like 'Vigilante' jumps into your mind after SP reminds you how good trash was in those days. Though his normally vitriolic, bile-soaked editorial has a kinder, gentler slant due to the effects of regular female companionship, Puchalski's reviews are — as always — about the most reliable and entertaining you'll find.

STAIN '8/'3
307 Wharton Street
Phila., PA 19147

Steve and Deb's latest with Kid Congo Powers (ex-Cramps), Royal Trux, and the Ringleader's exhortation on the power of independent wrasslin'. Includes a 3-song flexi, reviews, comics...

SWILL #12/6 for '10
114 W. 26th St., 11th Flr.
NY, NY 10001

Interviews with Big Hair, Fl, Engine 88 and Snapcase. Hysterical guide to malt liquor conducted by the research team that is Killdozer.

X MAG '13/'3
PO Box 1077
Royal Oak, MI 46068-1077

The Stainless Steel Japan issue. Oh, it gets better all the time. Interviews with Pop Will Eat Itself, Danielle Brisebois, and Tape-beatles. Plus reviews of Japanese candy, more Macros and three little words that make me verrrrry happy...Milk and Cheese!

WEB SITES

As if print zines weren't tough enough to keep up with, the WWW is overflowing with e-zines of all types. Add in the aforementioned dollars and cents discussion, and the move to the web is a "no-brainer." Member that each of the URL's listed should be preceded by **http://** *The following were all correct and active as of 9/25/95...*

GARY KING
coyote.accessnv.com/garyking

King, a Northwest crime reporter, is the author of a trio of true crime novels saddled with titles like *Blood Lust, Web of Deceit* and *Driven to Kill*. Alright, so we're not talkin' about Melville. Then again, I don't think Melville would've ever seen the benefit in uploading graphic crime scene photos, mug shots, and entries from private psycho journals onto the friendly confines of the web. Also links to the FBI Home Page (*www.fbi.gov*) where you can get the latest updates on the Unabomber and Oklahoma City bombing cases.

CLASSIC VIDEOGAMES
www.ecst.csuchico.edu/~gchance/index.html

In keeping with the spirit of the last two issues of ER, here's an indispensible resource for each and every classic game fan and collector. Games and designers, classic game catalogs, and info on obscure gaming systems like Fairchild Channel F, Bally Astrocade, and even the elusive Microvision. If info on the Atari 2600 is what you seek, then this is definitely the place to start your search. Here you'll find out who designed which games, all the games ever available for the 2600, ASCII versions of manuals, images, archives, lists and much more. Also provides a link to another 2600 page located at *www.etext.org/Zines/Intrrr.Nrrrd/atarl.html*

REVIEWS

Fun and Games • Food and Drink
Eye Candy • Cleets and Notes
all reviews by danTe

Fun and Games

NHL '95/NHLPA '93
(Electronic Arts for Sega Genesis)

As a kid I always thought the best thing about sports was the statistical geek factor. The games I loved most were stat-based ones whose playability was based upon a little strategy, a little skill, and (mostly) a comfort with numbers. *Strat-O-Matic Baseball* was a favorite with the Taylor boys, with JT creating his own supplemental cards, and even a hoops version that preceded the "official" release by years. [Granted, we weren't above a little padding; certain Philadelphia sports stars had career years in Taylor Strat leagues, namely Doug Collins, Dick Allen and Johnny Callison] Much to my mother's chagrin, our childhood home is still filled with the scoresheets of seasons gone by.

Well, it's the 90s and I'm a 90s kinda guy. I cook, I cry at Winnie the Pooh videotapes, and I'm slowly being won over by the Sega Genesis system. Though my beloved 2600 still holds its rightful place as the King of All Game Systems, the playability of games like *NHL* '95 is making a convert out of me.

We grabbed *NHLPA* '93 out of purely selfish, questionable reasons. In an effort to sponge bath the game's image, the powers that be took fighting out of the 1994 and subsequent versions of the game. Too bad, 'cause *NHLPA* '93 is overflowing with the features that made hockey the game I remembered — back when the Flyers ran roughshod over the league in the mid-70s. Bruising checks, blood-soaked ice, and two-fisted solutions to minor disagreements like a stick to the ribs. [Be still my heart! Gonster reports that *NHL* '96 features the return of two-fisted tales, though this compu-Canuck wishes he could start his own fights rather than wait for the pacifistic Sega to do so!]

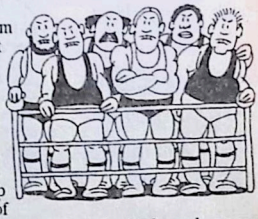
So, why would we want to settle for the new, sissy versions *sans* fighting? For one thing, the action seems lighting-paced compared to earlier versions; passes zip-zing crisply off sticks, cross-checks crush lesser men into the boards, and the action in the crease can become a dizzying flurry of sticks and Canadians, eh. Plus, there's little touches of reality like home ice, varying music (though no "Rock & Roll Part 2" by Gary Glitter), and the joy of playing the entire 1995 NHL schedule! I'm not talking 'bout a few games here and there gang, but the ENTIRE 1995 PRE-LOCKOUT SCHEDULE! If you wanted to — and had a massive amount of free time — you could play every game that should have been played this season! (But hey, we have lives, don't we?)

Me? I chose to play the Flyers 1995 season, hoping that they could ride my thuggish bullying tactics [and Eric Lindros' rocket-slapshot] to a playoff berth. Although I led the league in game-loss injuries to my opponents, I had to ride out a *pretty rocky* 5-40-1 start. I remarkably ended the season with 25 wins and Lindros did blast his way, barely, to the goal scoring title with a fast and furious last three games. Unfortunately, a Flyer playoff berth was not to be and I've adopted the Pittsburgh Penguins in the post-season...though I promise the Flyers will have their day once I get a grasp on the controls and learn to keep my short fuse in check.

Lehigh Annie says I'm a "junkie," but this is an excellent sports game with remarkable playability over the long haul.

WWF RAW **(Acclaim for Sega Genesis)**

What *NHL* '95 is to the world of hockey simulations, *WWF Raw* is to the world of — what else?! — wrasslin' simulations. Actually, that's not entirely true. When I think of "wrasslin'" I think of balding men in sleeveless t-shirts fouling the air of a Riverside, NJ high school gymnasium with the stench of dimestore stogies, BO, and the aftermath of frequent meaty meals. The grammatically correct "wrestling" is a more apt word for the 90s version of the territory once ruled by Chief Jay Strongbow and Big Dust, ol' Dust. The American Dream ("gonna dance for all the kids what ain't got no legs and can't dance like ol' Dust...").



Modeled after one of the many wrestling programs that airs on USA when they're not showing *Wings* or *Duckman*, this thing is programmed fulla the current crop of stars of the squared circle. All of which allows you to vent your frustrations via the trademark moves of Doink, Shawn Michaels, Bam Bam Bigelow, and The Undertaker (my personal fav and the only WWF wrestler worth a damn these days).

Despite bells and whistles that give you more moves than you need, *Raw* is seriously lacking in repeat playability. The worst villains (Owen Hart and Diesel to name two) are quickly defeated in individual matches, and only Tournament and multiple member matches hold even the slightest challenge. Quite frankly, once you've mastered the leap off the top rope (into or out of the ring) *Raw* is easy to conquer.

Food and Drink

MEXICAN PIZZA, HARD SHELL LIGHT TACO SUPREMES (2) (Taco Bell @ Rt. 30, Oaklyn)

Good food is like a good relationship. Find something appealing and stick with it regardless of the accompanying ups and downs. That's how I am with my TBA obsessions — I find a combo that's appealing and beat it to death by predictably ordering it every friggin' chance I get. My current obsession is the hearty meal shown above, ordered for $4.00 *on the nose* at the convenient Bell on the White Horse Pike.

It's a marvel this has become my standard order, considering the disastrous results of my first few attempts at ordering it. Despite spelling my request out clearly and precisely, my first venture resulted in a Mexican Pizza and two *Soft Shell* Taco Supremes, ugh. I don't know about you, but soft shell *anything* is like eating chewy, stale, tasteless bread. Granted, the chewy flour tortilla shell of a burrito works perfectly, holding the contents like a barely contained water balloon of meaty goodness. (Hence their nickname of "Slutty Meat Bomb") On a taco, the chewy soft shell just don't work.

Round two was equally disenchanting. Though my man at the drive thru window — whose enormous head breaks the limits of the "one size fits all" Bell headgear — repeated "hard shell" right along with me, he somehow missed the "supreme" part of my Taco Supreme. In other words, there weren't no sour cream on it.

Seasoned TBA vets are now asking themselves, "What makes a Taco Supreme *supreme* other than sour cream?" As far as we can tell, nothing. Thus, I was left with two hard shell regular ol' Tacos...of the genus *non-Supremo*.

I'm happy to report that subsequent visits have proven more fruitful. In fact, my only complaint these days lies in the questionable design of the Mexican Pizza tray. When placed on the passenger seat of a 1990 Ford Probe it inevitably deposits globules of cheesy goodness on the fabric due to the slope of the seat and unfortunately leaky engineering.

Recently (8/5/95 to be exact), the staff at the Route 30 Bell was firing on all cylinders and delivered into my waiting hands what may have been the finest Mexican Pizza ever created. Like those created for photo shoots and million dollar commercial spots, this MP was a precise blend of refried beans, oooozing — though stable — cheese, and perfectly placed toppings that held the two crisp tortillas in suspension. My hat is tipped to the staff on duty that day.

GENERAL TSO'S CHICKEN (@Debbie Wong, Riverdale St., Springfield, MA)

To me, the worst part about traveling alone on business is eating. I'm a sucker for tossing halfway decent eating habits out the window and succumbing to the lure of a cheap, quick meal at a local fast food joint. And, without a Taco Bell in sight, my $15 meal allowance has "Value Meal" written all over it. So, I consider it a stroke of luck that my comfy accommodations were right next door to Town & Country Liquors and Debbie Wong's Chinese Food.

Certainly no complaints about the selection, service or price at Town & Country. Some unknown Double Bocks and nice sized bottles of old favs like Sam Adams Honey Porter caught my eye; plus, aisle upon aisle of imports and regional brews left me wanting to extend my stay in this scenic turnpike exit.

Ordering at Debbie Wong's was less of a thrill-a-minute experience, as the young *maitre 'd* hovered in my personal space, forcing a quick glance and a fast, impetuous, order frenzy. Bypassing traditional, safer favorites like combination platters I went straight for the doughy goodness of some steamed dumplings and the reasonably tasty (or so I assumed) General Tso's Chicken. Generally speaking, GTC is a mildly spicy blend of slightly fried chicken, hot peppers, veggies, and spicy sauce. At least that's how every other Chinese restaurant I've ever frequented had served it...

Apparently, Debbie Wong does things a lil' differently and I was greeted by the harsh sight of batter-dipped, deep fried hunks of chicken as big as my fist, limp broccoli, and a gooey sauce that smacked of those big 10 gallon tubs I saw lurking through the back kitchen door. Needless to say, the "chicken" was impossible to spear or control with my chopsticks, and I regrettably tossed $14.81 worth of food (minus the Steamed Dumplings) into the garbage can near the elevators. Luckily, my liquid diet sustained me into the long night of free HBO watching.

Eye Candy

DARKMAN 2: THE RETURN OF DURANT (MGM Home Video)

The creators of this follow-up had an admittedly tough task on their hands. Sam Raimi's original DARKMAN remains the best comic book superhero film of recent times. Easily superior to any of the three Bat-outings, the flick also had a low-budget schlock-factor that boosted the entertainment value when held up to low-budget fare like THE PUNISHER, CAPTAIN AMERICA, and the recent FANTASTIC FOUR fiasco. Add in Raimi's trademark camerawork and a pre-Schindler turn by Liam Neeson as the scarred hero and you've got the makings of a true classic on your hands. Which it was.

Enter D2, a made-for-video series entry that resurrects Doctor Peyton Westlake/Darkman in the guise of actor Andrew Vosloo (Lance Henriksen's cool sidekick in HARD TARGET), as well as Westlake's presumed-dead nemesis Robert Durant. Durant, again played by Larry Drake, awakens from the coma that resulted from the gigantic helicopter explosion in DARKMAN and begins reclaiming the crime territory that slipped from his grasp. Drake is capable in

the role, again making this viewer forget the mental retardation that he so obviously suffers from. Tragic that only NBC's 'LA Law' had the guts to let this talented, dimwitted teddy bear act in his natural state!

"Storywise" D2 is a remake of D1, with Westlake desperately trying to extend the life of his synthetic skin polymer past the 99 minute mark while he and Durant try to snuff each other. Unfortunately, D2 is almost a note for note rehash of D1, with Darkman assuming the personalities of Durant's henchmen in order to gain info and cause chaos. Clever the first time, it has become a shopworn gimmick well into this sequel.

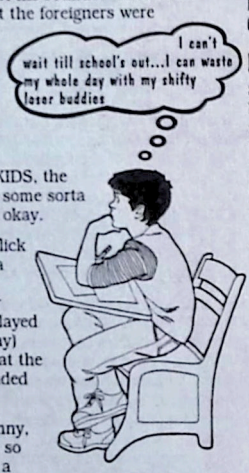
Better than most of the made-for-video fodder that languishes on your video shelves, DARKMAN 2 suffers from the superiority of the first film and the inevitable comparisons. Vosloo credibly steps into the role, and in some ways makes for a better Darkman/Westlake than Neeson did. His Billy Zane-esque looks and quasi-European voice gives the character a sinister edge Neeson never conveyed.

A tad long, the concept might have fared better as an occasional tv movie for one of the many "fourth" networks. A third installment (DIE, DARKMAN, DIE!) is slated for video release soon.

KIDS (Miramax/Theatrical Release)

Against our better judgement we ventured into Philly for a quick meal at Hot Tamales (wow! ultra-cheap Mexican just off South Street — see *The Hungover Gourmet* on the back cover for more info) and an "art" film for our Friday night amusement. Fresh off a four-star in that morning's Inquirer was LIVING IN OBLIVION, starring Steve "Don Knotts is My Father" Buscieml — so it came as no surprise that the 9"35 show was sold out.

"Remember when we were the only people that came to art films in Philly," questioned the Gonster, a patented tirade itching at the base of his brain. "You know who's to blame for this don't you?" I shrugged my shoulders, knowing that no answer would suffice, nor would it deter him from the completion of his rounds. "The fuckin' Americans, that's who! It used to be that the foreigners were the only ones who made art flicks, and then we were safe!" Suddenly, the pitch and volume of Lou's voice rose to a public disturbance level. "I can't go see *that* Martha, it has subtitles! Now the Americans make art flicks and there's nothing stopping **these** people!"



The tirade subsided and we settled for KIDS, the ultra-hyped docudrama being hailed as some sorta modern masterpiece by critics. Ummm, okay.

Taking place on a hot day in NYC, the flick (mainly) follows Telly (Leo Fitzpatrick), a horny, mush-mouthed lothario and his doped-out, malt-chuggin' buddy Casper (Justin Pierce). In a sidelight, Jennie (played by the amazingly one note Chloe Sevigny) tries to find Telly after she discovers that the "Virgin surgeon" has given her the dreaded HIV virus.

So we follow Telly and Casper, then Jenny, the Telly and Casper, then Jenny...and so on until everything comes to a head at a decadent, wild party where Telly's trying to deflower his latest conquest and Casper is trying to quash those few rebelling, surviving brain cells.

Do we care? Well, obviously somebody does since this is supposed to be some sort of "wake up call." To whom? Are parents supposed to leap to the extremely farfetched conclusion that *their* teens are acting like this? I suppose so, considering the blithering commentary this "controversial masterpiece" has evoked.

What I found most horrifying about KIDS was the way that screenwriter Harmony Corine and director Larry Clark manipulated the audience like we were dime store puppets. They set up Telly as a sleazebag from scene 1, yet attempt to make Casper a semi-pathetic, yet amusing, teen caricature. Too stupid, stoned and drunk to be truly harmful, Casper's like a Jeff Spicoli for the 90s, only using his brain long enough to figure where his next 40 is coming from. Unfortunately, that means Casper (and the audience) is being set up for the big kill. Corine and Clark know that his film ending act is so despicable we can't help but leave the theater bummed out and railing against the current state of teendom.

Well, fuck that. Though the reel-life kids depicted in this flick — and the obnoxious real-life tykes in their MTV-inspired uniform — piss me off, I realize that they're only weakening their own gene pool. Maybe eating your young isn't such a bad idea after all.

ALL - Pummel

Why it took so long for them to land on a major is beyond me. Why they chose this weak collection of half-baked ditties is an even bigger mystery. Half the songs sound like rewrites from other albums, and only a handful are worthy of release as a cd-5. Most of this should've been relegated to the dustbin of history. (Interscope)

BENDER - Music for Four Ears 7"

Though I wasn't totally sold on their 'Funny Kar' album, this two-song single ("Soap Opera," "Who Cares") is more what I expected. Breezy in an old Green Day-vein, except somewhat unmemorable. (Ringing Ear)

BUCKNER & GARCIA - Pac-Man Fever

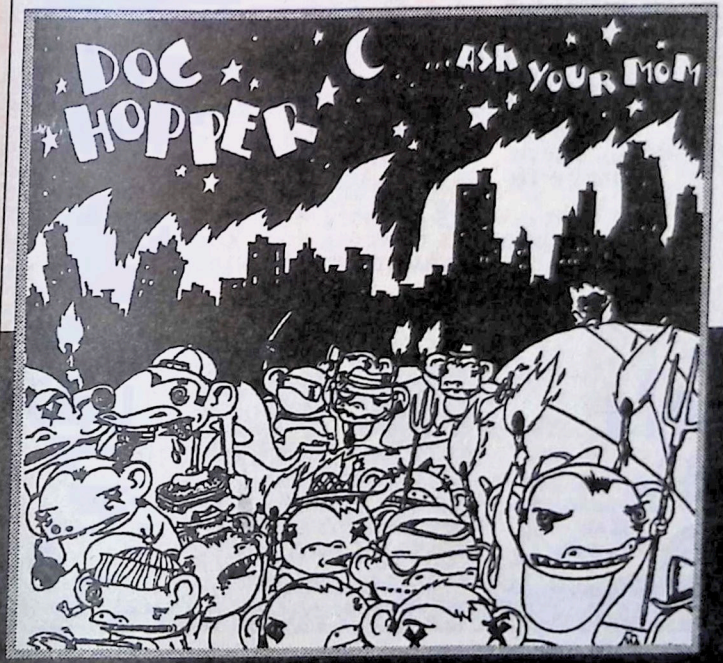
Sure, the title track was a big hit single, but the album got the rap of being some sort of shallow cash-in on a bewildering pop phenomenon. *So???* I know all of you can still belt out "Fever" with the best of 'em, but I like people who can remember the Journey-inspired "Ode to a Centipede," the bluesy roar of "Do the Donkey Kong" (dig that false ending!), or "Defender," which could've been at home on any Meatloaf release. Yet it's the piano and sound-effect combo on "Goin' Berzerk" that shows the promise of life and love outside the arcade: *I think I'm going Berzerk/Would you like to come, too?/I can't stop now, I'm addicted/I'm Berzerk over you!* A fitting, optimistic ending to a bittersweet, neglected album. (Columbia)

SHAUN CASSIDY - Greatest Hits

Granted, a true "greatest hits" package from this teen idol of the 70s would be a three-track single featuring "Da Doo Ron Ron" (#1), "That's Rock & Roll" (#4), and "Hey Deanie" (#6). Other than that, I don't think anything else Joe Hardy unleashed on an unsuspecting world ever made much of a musical dent. However, the hits do hold a certain goofy bubble-gum charm (yes, I bought his first solo album back in the day...but, you probably did too) and the selection of tracks from the bizarre 'Wasp' is inspired, to say the least. If you're not familiar with that one, pick it up in a bargain bin for a buck some day. It's produced by Todd Rundgren and Cassidy's backup band is none other than Utopia. (Curb)

ALEX CHILTON - A Man Called Destruction

Call it 'High Priest II' if you will. Like that 1987 release, Chilton fills this disc full of eclectic originals, Italian covers, and easy-going rock — all of which border on a lounge act after too many smokes and



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Ringing Ear Records

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shots. This time 'round, the formula is even more enjoyable with ultra-kitschy covers like "What's Your Sign Girl?" and "New Girl in School." (Ardent)

JAWBREAKER - Dear You

I needlessly worried that Jawbreaker might get sucked into this whole "pop-punk" phenomena and let themselves get turned into The Next Big Thing. Luckily, their big time major label debut has all the cranky, failed romantic charm of their indie efforts, and a few tracks are simply superb ("Save Your Generation," "Fireman" and "Bad Scene, Everbody's Fault" leap immediately to mind). On repeated listens I'm guessing that this'll be just too damn cerebral and personal for the bandwagon jumpers to hop onto. (DGC)

MONO MEN - TSB

Not to toot our own horns, but I wanted to inform you dear readers that The Snap-On Dickies rode a second-half surge (and a 14-game winning streak) to the Cherry Hill Playdrome's Thursday Night Mixed League Championship. In fact, our own Cronus Mantor dispatched the competition like a medieval god of siege warfare while Mrs. Mantor and Sister Leigh-anna hustled the competition with early-season gutter balls. Me? I brought up the rear and added comic relief. What does this have to do with the new Mono Men release? Other than bowling, absolutely nothing. This is simply a raucous document of the men playing a Windy City bachelor party whilst Tammy "Boom Boom" Mercedes shakes her money-maker. Beer, bowling and strippers. It truly don't get any better than *this!* (Estrus)

aka PRINCE - The Gold Experience

I'd given up on the P-man a few years ago, content to throw on the three-disc best of and wonder where it'd all gone wrong. (Actually, I know damn well where it went sour...the moment he did that damn "Batdance" song!) Sadly, most of the stuff he performed and released with the New Power Generation was a shadow of his former funky bad self. 'The Gold Experience' — with a throwaway computer culture narrative throughout — is a return to form and, more importantly, a return to the nasty guitar playing that made '1999' and 'Purple Rain' such groovy spins. (Warner Bros.)

RANCID - ...And Out Come the Wolves

I suppose the Rancid backlash will be starting soon, since we all know they *planned* to hit it big with their blend of Sham 69, the Clash, and ska. *Of course they did.* People need to shut up and just enjoy the tunes, 'cause this is a snappy rocker with some truly outstanding cuts ("Roots Radicals," "Time Bomb," "Olympia, WA"), though lacking the kick-you-in-the-ass power of 'Let's Go!'. (Epitaph)

RIVERDALES - Riverdales

Lemme get this straight. Screeching Weasel disbands, mutates into a new band featuring 3/4 of the old band, and reappears on the scene

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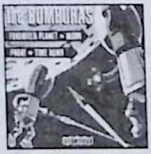

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as Riverdales? (Please note: That's Riverdales, like Ramones — there's no "The" there) Unfortunately, it just sounds like Screeching Weasel *trying* to do Ramones songs. Some of it crunches, some of it's by-the-numbers, and a few Vapid-essayed tracks show that goofball's heretofore untapped sensitive side. Too bad the disc and Ben's new "hairdo" scream Marky-era Ramones. (Lookout)

SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS - Dirt Track Date

On my way home from work tonight I saw a bumper sticker that read: *Happiness is a Northern Bound Yankee*. Unfortunately, this heartfelt mantra was plastered to the bumper of a car bearing New Jersey license plates (about as northern a state as you're gonna get), so I couldn't take it very seriously. Sorta like the major label day-bew of SCOTS after a handfulla heralded indie releases. My problem? First, the songs are embarrassing attempts at Cornpone Cute ala the B-52's. Ugh. Second, and more importantly, an album that politely tries to cop the groovy swamp charm of the Cramps shouldn't be so antiseptic in its production that you could use it in place of Bactine. Thoroughly disappointing. (DGC)

SUPERGRASS - I Should Coco

I bought this disc on the strength of reviews that said I'd be pogoing the night away to the retro-Jam sounds of this skinny white boy UK trio. Maybe I need to be smoking what those critics were obviously ingesting. About the only thing Supergrass has in common with the Jam and Clash is their Brit heritage. Comparisons end there, since the band reminds me more of a cross between the all-over-the-stylistic-map approach of the Meices and the experimental Pere Ubu. I guess I should thank those critics though, 'cause this isn't an album I'd have sought out. (Capitol)

SUPERSUCKERS - Sacrilicous Sounds of

A few issues ago I mentioned that the last Supersuckers album sounded like a demented country version of the marvelous Didjits. Despite my pain at seeing the 'Jits die, it's with great pleasure that I listen to Mr. Rick Sims work his sleazy guitar magic on this album. From the initial power-slide on "Bad Bad Bad" you can hear little touches from his repertoire all over the disc, and to good effect — it's the band's best release to date. (Sub Pop)

URGE OVERKILL - Exit the Dragon

Dear Geffen Records,

Thank you for the rather intricate, and amusing, practical joke. However, I feel the need to remind you that April Fool's Day is still several months away and this prank would have more impact closer to next spring. Please forward the real advance of Urge Overkill's follow-up to the phenomenal 'Saturation' toot sweet.

By the way, would you like me to return the laughable joke band tape you sent, or may I keep it for future taping purposes???

My love for 'Saturation,' UO's major label debut, is a matter of public record. A hook-filled homage to the glory days of arena rock *ala* Cheap Trick and Blue Oyster Cult, the album and its potential hits fell by the wayside due to DGC's inept handling.* "Hey, I know! Let's position them as indie rockers made good and have them tour with Pearl Jam." Ehhhhhh! Wrong!

The time is now 1995 and UO guitarist/songwriter/singer King "Eddie" Roeser seems to be going through an identity crisis of sorts. Unfortunately, the band allowed the Pooh-shaped bassist to search for his lost identity on their new album, resulting in such stillborn efforts as "The Break," "Jaywalkin'" and "Honesty Files." Where 'Saturation' had hooks that could break your jaw, you couldn't find a hook here with a microscope.

Not to pin all the blame on Roeser, though. The usually dependable Nash Kato throws a handful of boners into the mix, most glaringly on "Somebody Else's Body," a numbingly bad sing-songy track that makes one forget about "Sister Havana" and "Positive Bleeding." If you want to rock, grab the Supersuckers instead. (Geffen)

WAT TYLER - Tummy

What can I say about a disc that ranges from punk to pop to kid's tunes to fake opera and beer hall rumble over the course of its 43 (yes, that's right) tracks. The perfect album for a lazy, rainy afternoon. Then again, we haven't had one of those in so long that I could be completely mistaken. (Lookout)

THE WYNONA RIDERS - J.D. Salinger

This band's Lookout-issued 7" with "Childhood Games" and "Pack Rat" was ballyhooed by the Gonster and I as the best release that year (1992). So, it was with heavy heart that we took the news the band had split up before recording a long-player. Well strap me to a pig and roll me in the mud, 'cause here's a 30-track collection that reopens their window of opportunity. Pretty on-target, right from the mock *Catcher in the Rye* cover art to the catchy, simple punk of their tunes. Though the best, most thoughtful tune may be their 1995 take on the Pistols bite-the-hand-that-feeds-you anthem, "Rock and Roll Swindle." (Lookout)

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Was that the first show on the tour?

WK: Of the American leg of the tour, yeah. I'm very proud of what I played and what the band played.

How did the European tour go?

Kind of overwhelming in a way. The depth of passion of the music fans in Europe, it just seems like they follow who came from what band and who influenced what band and the research all this stuff. Like expatriate American jazz musicians, they could be playing in Joe's Primitive Bar in their home city of Cleveland, but can go to Europe and play the Town Hall in Amsterdam. Anytime you go 5,000 miles to do your thing it becomes kinda special.

And this music we do, it's essentially an American art form. It comes out of this culture and its kind of exotic to the Europeans, I think they recognize the value of it. There's a lot of really hardcore MC5 fans over there.

It ran the gamut, some nights there was stage diving and slam dancing, and other nights they just stood and listened, hanging onto every note and then at the end they would cheer.

That's got to be really gratifying for you.

It was wild man. In Paris we drew over a thousand people. The club [held] 850 people and I said, "This is gonna be a disaster man. There's gonna be 300 people here."

Was making 'The Hard Stuff' cathartic for you? There seem to be some very autobiographical pieces on it.

The actual work of recording it, everything proceeded. You know, I've been making records for awhile and I also have my other hat as a producer, so all that went as it should. The catharsis came leading up to the point where I could make this record. Everything I had to go through from losing my band, and this downward spiral that ended up with me in prison, and then coming out with Johnny and all that different shit I did. And then finally getting to the point where I could reconcile who I was as a young man, the work I did with the MC5, and the work I do today and who I am now. To kind of make peace with the MC5 and say, "I'm proud to have been a member of one of the greatest rock bands of all time, but that was then and this is now." Reclaim my lost brothers, and to lose Fred Smith and Rob Tiner on this physical plain, but to have them back in my heart and know where all that fits and works kind of freed me up from the bitterness at the loss of the band. And then watching everything that's happened in the meantime and seeing all these fucking hair bands on MTV and saying, "My band'd play with these guys and spit them out!" ☠

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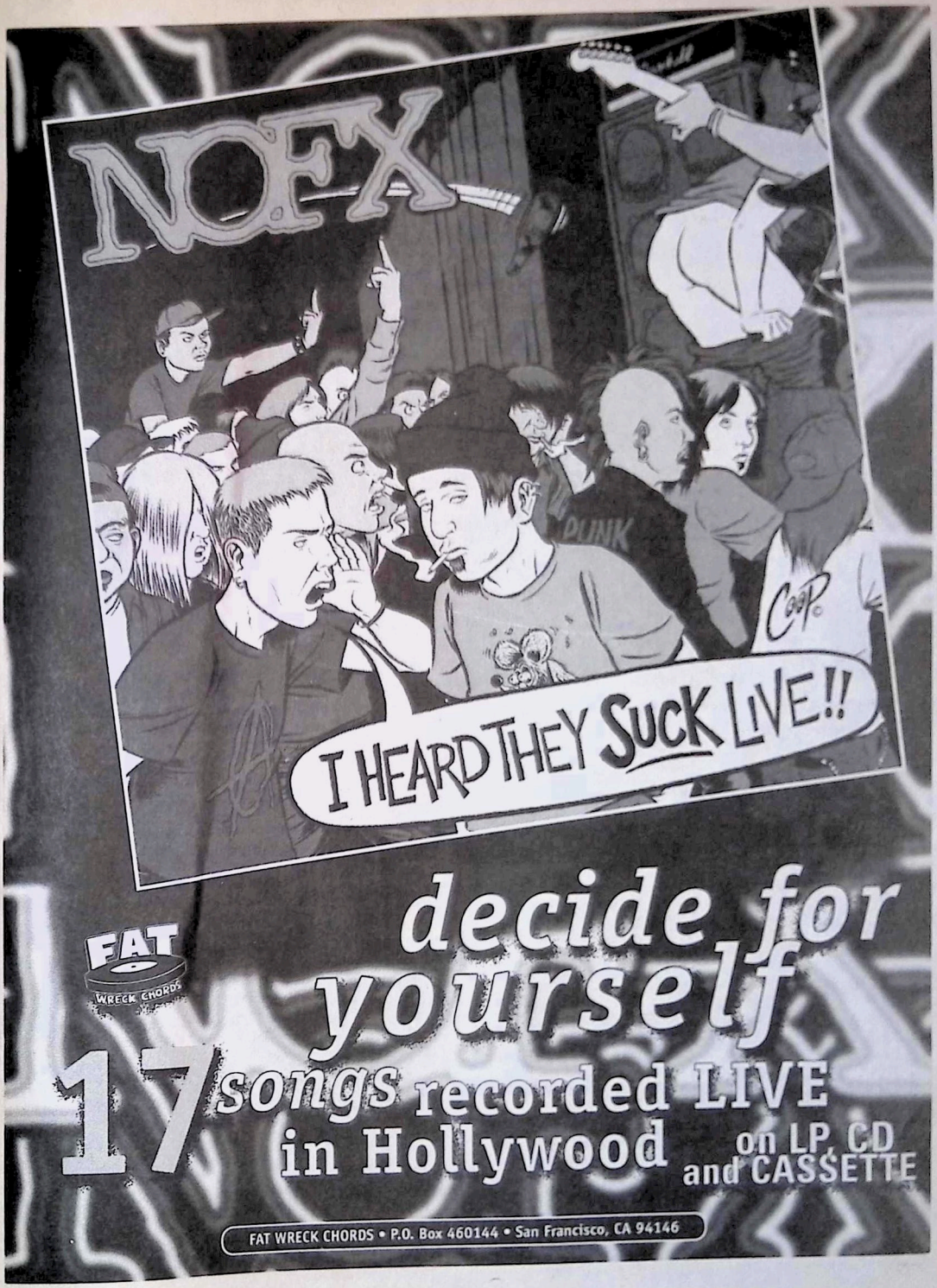
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The Hungover Gourmet

Current Favs in the City of Bro' Love and the Land of Pleasant Living

Once upon a time,

yours truly spent weekends in the Baltimore area soaked to the gills with that perpetually watered-down brew known as Natty Boh, National Bohemian if we're being formal. Politely described in most beer guides as being "good beer at a reasonable price," a case of Boh can usually be scored with what's left in your wallet just before payday. Light enough to drink about 18 or so, the beer usually left me with a stupid headache and a serious gas problem for the next 48 hours. If memory serves me correctly, WKDU's weekly Natty Boh runs kept the doors of Springfield Beer Distributor open from 1987 to 1989.

But the times, they are a changin'. And with new times come new tastes, new ideas, and new partners in crime. The Kakster and I recently blew into the Inner Harbor for a little r&r, figuring that we'd sample the local nightlife and report back to the masses on the lessons that Philly could learn from the Baltimore Tourist Bureau.

Unfortunately, our first night in town led to a tragic discovery...THE BALTIMORE BREWING CO., a German beer hall style bar/restaurant on the border between the Inner Harbor and Little Italy that offered us a scary selection of amenities: thick cigar smoke from the crew of regulars congregating at the bar, cheap eats, and fresh beer made on the premises.

Settling into our seats on that first evening we created a thoroughly satisfying meal of appetizers that included: a Chicken Corn Chowder ($3.50) that was thick, chunky, and just spicy enough; Nürnberger ($4.75), a plate of grilled pork sausages smothered in onions and peppers that would make me forget my weeknight eating regimen in a heartbeat; and an artery-clogging slab of Fried Camembert ($5.50) that was deep fried to a crispy brown and served hot and gooey with crackers and a cranberry sauce. Mmmm, cheesey...

Not to think we wasted this good food on soda or java, we also made a habit of sampling from the well-stocked selection of homemade, fresh beers that arrived in pitchers heavy and thick enough to flatten the skull of your worst enemy. Having arrived at what must have been "Happy Hour," we paid insanely cheap prices for the 60 fluid ounce pitchers of their roasted, malty dark beer and the seasonal Altbier that was being released that day. Whilst I downed the dark in memory of my beloved Yuengling Porter, Kaki steered clear — she does have more delicate sensibilities — and went for the clean, fresh taste of the Altbier.

The only negative of the entire evening was the cast of 'Friends' that brought their extended family reunion to the table next to us. Just 'cause they act like that on tv folks doesn't mean you have to adopt it in your daily lives!

Day Two in the hometown of the one and only John Waters resulted in a hearty lunch at BABUSCI'S, a cozy place in the heart of Little Italy. We thought it a tad slow for a Saturday afternoon, but the neighborhood's Italian festival was occurring a few blocks away, and who can turn down a good greased pole race. (Why do I still remember that from an episode of 'Laverne & Shirley'?) That simply meant really attentive service for us, and portions big enough to choke hungry tourists.

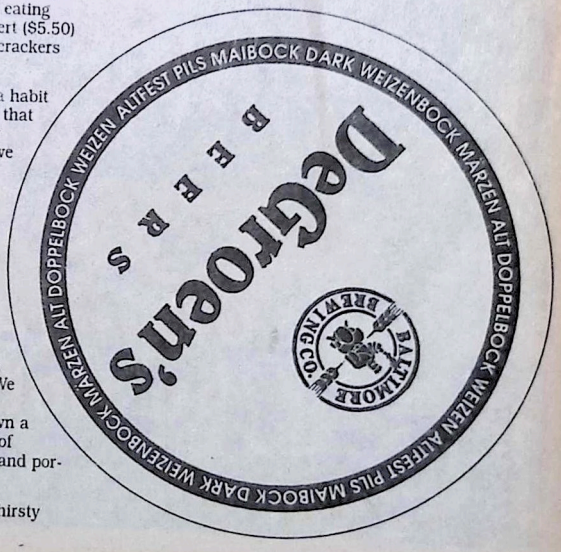
A day of walking through the city's high-priced tourist traps made us thirsty for...more beer, perhaps?! Suckers for a good thing, we tromped the few blocks back to the Baltimore Brewing Co. and downed a coupla more pitchers of dark along with heapin' helpings of Chicken Corn Chowder and Nürnberger. (I know what you're thinking. "Were those the *only* things on the menu?" The answer is no, but we weren't feeling very experimental, and I do order the same thing every time I set foot in a Taco Bell.)

Not one to overlook

what's happening in these parts, we've been frequenting the ultra-convenient and ultra-inexpensive HOT TAMALES CAFE at 525 S. 4th Street ever since Sister Leigh-anna gave their Black Bean Soup the "thumbs up." Cheaper and faster than The Mexican Post, more centrally located than Taco House, Tamales is fast becoming an ER fav. (I also enjoy their selection of table top arcade games, currently featuring "Pac-Man" and "Dig Dug")

With only two items on the entire menu nearing the $5 mark (Tamales @ $4.95 and the football-sized California Burrito @ $4.25), this is definitely the place for a quick bite after avoiding that creepy guy that hands out flowers near Zipperhead or before heading to the Ritz.

Though I won't be so bold as to speak for the Gonster, he does seem to be very fond of the aforementioned Cali Burrito, a densely packed meat bomb filled with vegetarian refried beans, seasoned ground beef or turkey, fiesta rice, lettuce, tomato, cheese, red sauce, sour cream and guacamole as the glue that holds this nuclear payload together. On our last two visits we've dropped the CB from a height of approximately six inches, fearing that a plummet of greater distance would threaten the foundation of the building. It's the menu item for a hungry poor person.

I can also vouch for the Chicken Nachos ($1.75), Black Bean Soup ($1.25), Tacos (95¢), Black Beans and Rice (also 95¢) and the fast, excellent service. I just wish they were open later than 9 pm.

They don't serve, but at these prices you can afford some bucks for a pitcher of Porter at Manny Brown's if you so desire.